

An interview with James N. Hollis (2)

JAMES N. HOLLIS

An Interview Conducted by
Joe Kish
December 11, 1980

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NARRATOR DATA SHEET

12/11/80

DATE

Name of narrator: James N. HollisAddress: 127 Madison, Terre Haute, IN 47803 Phone: Birthdate: 11/05/05 Birthplace: Terre Haute, INLength of residence in Terre Haute: 75 yearsEducation: Terre Haute public schools--Wiley High School.Indiana University at Bloomington for two years.Occupational history: Terre Haute Monument Co., president,
1932-1975.Special interests, activities, etc. Elks Club, golf, Historical
Society, 20-30 Club, board of Cemetery Regents, Family
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JAMES N. HOLLIS

Tape 1

December 11, 1980

Office of Joe Kish, ISU Alumni Building, 64- Cherry Street,
Terre Haute, Indiana

INTERVIEWER: Joe Kish

TRANSCRIBER: Kathleen M. Skelly

For: Vigo County Oral History Program

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JK: I'm Joe Kish with the oral history project. I am talking today, December 11, with James Nelson Hollis, a distinguished Terre Haute citizen. We're going to talk about Terre Haute and Jim's business in Terre Haute.

Jim, first tell us, are you a native of Terre Haute; and can you tell us a little bit about where you were born, where you went to school?

HOLLIS: I would say that I was born in Terre Haute, Indiana, when the Wabash River flowed north. This was a little early, but I was born here in 1905 -- November the 5th. I've continuously resided in Terre Haute with the exception of a few years at Indiana University and a year or so at Barre, Vermont, working in the granite industry.

I went to school at first at Hulman School and from kindergarten, which was compulsory then, on through the eighth grade in this particular school.

JK: Jim, Hulman School? Where was that?

HOLLIS: Hulman School was at 7th and Swan Streets on the southeast corner of 7th and Swan. It later became an annex to Wiley High School, so I returned to the same school. I didn't flunk back into the same school. I don't mean that . . . I wasn't that . . . quite that dumb. But it was used by Dr. William Kessel's father in the science department.

JK: Dr. Kessel is . . .

HOLLIS: Dr. Bill Kessel's father.

JK: Bill Kessel. You're speaking of Dr. William Kessel, a professor of chemistry at Indiana State University.

HOLLIS: Right. His father was Dr. Kessel that taught at Hulman School annex for Wiley High School.

HOLLIS: And Hulman School was a public school as Wiley High School was. And his introduction to each class on the first day of school . . . naturally it was very warm then. He would have a bucket in the sink and have the bucket about half full. And by the time the class got assembled it was clear full. He'd pull the bucket up, and without any warning throw it all over the floor -- just splosh the floor. "This is to demonstrate a principle I want you to know. This is known as evaporation." He says, "It won't be here very long, but it will cool us off."

JK: (laughs heartily) Old air-conditioning.

HOLLIS: Old air-conditioning.

He was a wonderful teacher and very practical and had a great sense of humor.

With much effort and some effort at football I graduated from Wiley High School in 1924. Then [I] attended Indiana University at Bloomington for two years. And after discovering that my academic prowess was not what it should be, my father decided that I should become a granite cutter; and I was shipped off to Barre, Vermont, to learn the trade of granite cutting, which at that time was more manual than mental.

Then as time goes on, of course, each industry becomes more mental, and the machinery gets to be more complicated.

JK: What year was that that you went to Vermont?

HOLLIS: It was 1926 and '27.

JK: And you were at Indiana University?

HOLLIS: Nineteen twenty-four-'twenty-five.

Then coming back to Terre Haute, I went into the monument business with my father, working as a granite cutter and as a salesman until he passed away in 1932; then becoming president of the Terre Haute Monument Company and continuing the operation of the business until 1975. It was the largest granite industry in this area. We covered about a 50-mile radius, erecting memorials of all types for all cemeteries.

JK: Now, getting back . . . before we go on, Jim, you went to Indiana University. Was that the raccoon

JK: coat days?

HOLLIS: You mean the John Held, Jr. days? Oh, of course! That's when . . .

JK: John Held, Jr.? Who's he?

HOLLIS: John Held, Jr. was the cartoonist that made the flapper famous and the slick-haired, bell-bottomed pants boy that did the Charleston. This was a tremendous time and continued on through 1929 'til the depression in 1930-31. It would have continued on farther, but money ran out.

JK: Was that about the time that Hoagy Carmichael was attending Indiana University?

HOLLIS: Hoagy Carmichael with his "Stardust"; Hoagy Carmichael with his "Jew Boy Blues," "Boneyard Shuffle," "Havana Nights," "Old Buttermilk Sky" . . . this was his era, and he practiced in the Book Nook and composed . . .

JK: The Book Nook at IU?

HOLLIS: The Book Nook, which was across from the campus and was the hangout for all the musicians and all the loafers in that area; and Hoagy picked the time to work at the piano that was in the corner to compose "Stardust."

JK: On any occasion were you there with him or watching?

HOLLIS: Well, we were all there with him when we had the time from our classes and when we skipped classes to watch him and to listen to him work. And he had several friends that were continuously with him. He wore a black raincoat at all times -- rain or shine, hot or cold. There was a man named Monkhaus who was son of the head of the music department and who was, unfortunately, crippled in one leg. But he carried an alto horn and was a tremendous musician. In other words, he was a technical musician, and he put everything that Hoagy wrote down on paper. Hoagy didn't know how to put it on paper.

JK: Was Hoagy a music major?

HOLLIS: Hoagy was not a composer in the sense that he could put it on paper. He picked it out and knew the melody. He would pick it out on the piano, but he didn't know the notes. But Wolfgang put it on paper so it could be . . .

JK: Wolfgang. This is the son of the music professor.

HOLLIS: That was his nickname.

JK: What was his actual name? Do you remember that?

HOLLIS: I can't remember his name. His father was head of the music department. His name was Monkhaus.

JK: Chairman of the music department. Now that's interesting.

HOLLIS: And the three of them along with Wad Allen, who later became an executive with one of the large companies in the country, Johns-Manville, were continuously together and had such silly sayings. These were the silly years and the salad years, and they would Somebody would say as they were walking along, "Hogs with brooms in their ears," and everybody would fall down laughing. Each silly thing . . .

JK: Hogs with brooms in their ears!

HOLLIS: This was And sometimes they'd change to "bananas." (laughs)

JK: (laughs)

HOLLIS: This was the idea that everything was funny, and it was at that time. For all people, I think. There was very little that held any of the youngsters back. It was the first liberation of youngsters, and I think it's continued to happen in surges until we got around to the 1960 era, which I don't know if it was good or not. We were looked down on by the older people, which we should have been because we were silly. But there was a certain amount of good fun, levity in the whole thing. The school Indiana University was about 3500 -- small

JK: Thirty-five hundred students?

HOLLIS: Thirty-five hundred students. /It was/ small, moonlit, enamoured of its own beauty. The campus was beautiful, although in a rustic way. The buildings were of the Victorian era, but they were, well, just loved. And it was a very quiet, peaceful, loving time. That was Bloomington the years I was there 1924-25-26 -- along in there.

JK: And then you went on to the . . . stonecutting.

HOLLIS: Stonecutting, working in a shed that was built out of inch-thick boards that you could throw a cat through the holes. It got down to 30 below zero, and you used to have to wet down your stone with water, and you set your water up under the steam pipe in a can. By the next morning it would be frozen tight, so you'd have to knock it out and get more water.

JK: You used water what, to . . .

HOLLIS: To hold down the dust because silica is /the cause of silicosis/.

JK: When you were sawing the stone?

HOLLIS: When you were cutting the stone.

JK: How long were you there in Barre, Vermont?

HOLLIS: About a year, a year-and-a-half.

JK: Bare-ee, is it?

HOLLIS: Bare-ee. Barre. About a year, a year-and-a-half. It's about six miles . . . Barre is about six miles from the capital of Vermont, Montpelier.

JK: I see.

HOLLIS: And is located close to the quarries. Rock of Ages Corporation is there, and they had several other big quarries at that time. It's still universally recognized as one of the greater granites of the world.

JK: What kind of stone did you cut there?

HOLLIS: Granite.

JK: Granite only?

HOLLIS: That's all. In the same state . . . it's peculiar that in the same state of Vermont there are granite deposits, which are volcanic, in one end of the state and marble deposits, which are sedimentary at the bottom of lakes and oceans, at the other end of the state and all within a distance of 60-70 miles. But it shows the wonders of nature that you could have this sort of a situation. The marble was considered great and was known as the Vermont Marble Company, a big corporation. And the granite's great, and the biggest company there is the Rock of Ages Corporation.

JK: And then did you . . . came back to Terre Haute?

HOLLIS: Came back to Terre Haute and married Mildred Balsley. Mildred Forristal Balsley. Her family was not of recent vintage in Terre Haute; they'd been here for years and years and years. She was one of the most beautiful things that ever happened in Terre Haute. She looked like Blanche Sweet, the reigning star in the movies at that time. And I was lucky enough to hold on long enough to get her. We had gone together since we were 15 years old. And we've been married 50 years -- after going together for about nine years before that. You might say I've spent 59 years out of this 75 with my wife.

JK: Well, that's wonderful. That's wonderful.

HOLLIS: Oh, it's been wonderful. Sure.

We have two children. One of them Lynn is in Youngstown, Ohio, and is a welfare worker. She is a graduate of Indiana State, and her postgraduate work was done at Western Reserve. The other one Hilary graduated from Indiana State and had one of the first 4-year nursing degrees out of Indiana State. She now is practicing in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, where she lives with her husband, Stanley Hamilton, who is Dr. Stanley Hamilton and who teaches at Bridgewater State.

JK: I see.

HOLLIS: Both of them having two children.

JK: Okay.

Now, the business . . . right when you came

JK: back from Vermont, did you get into the business with your When was your business The Terre Haute Monument actually established in Terre Haute?

HOLLIS: The business of Terre Haute Monument Company was actually established in Terre Haute between 1900 and 1901. It had had a little squirt before that in Casey, Illinois.

JK: Did your father . . .

HOLLIS: My father established the business, and it was a conglomerate . . .

JK: And his name was?

HOLLIS: Lynn Holmes Hollis.

JK: Lynn Holmes Hollis.

HOLLIS: His wife's name was Inez Travolia Hollis. Her family had come into the area between here and Marshall, Illinois, very, very far back. And her grandfather was from Watertown, New York. He had been an officer in Napoleon's army -- a Corsican -- and was banished, of course, from France after the defeat of Napoleon. /He/ followed Napoleon's brother to Watertown, New York, where he /Napoleon's brother/ bought about 3,000 acres of ground for the followers who came with him to the United States. He came down from Canada after not being allowed to do what they wanted to do in Canada.

JK: This is Travolia?

HOLLIS: This is Travolia. There are still Travolias over in the area, and one of my ancestors . . .

JK: In what area?

HOLLIS: In the area of Bullskin, Armstrong Chapel, Darwin Ferry, and Marshall.

JK: These are all in New York?

HOLLIS: No, these are in Indiana [and Illinois].

JK: Oh, Indiana!

HOLLIS: Watertown, New York, was the area that they emigrated from.

JK: I see.

HOLLIS: To this area. These are all names of towns or locations in Illinois and Indiana.

JK: Illinois.

HOLLIS: Illinois. Just across the line in Illinois. One of them . . . one of the girls married a schoolteacher, and he was away nine months of the year, and she cried herself to sleep every night because the wolves howled so bad over there in the Wabash Valley she couldn't sleep.

JK: Oh, (laughs) my goodness. Wolves in the Wabash Valley. That's on the Illinois side, right?

HOLLIS: Not human wolves. These were real, actual biting wolves.

JK: (laughs heartily)

So then, getting back . . . your father established the business in 19-- , early 1901, you say?

HOLLIS: Yes. And, the first location was on North 5th Street in the 200 block. The second location was at 5th and Walnut on the northeast corner, and then it moved to the southeast corner, where he built a building particularly for that. We made so much noise that we had to put a plant up at the river bridge to cut the granite. And we went into the manufacturing of a cement burial vault used for the interment of human remains. It fit over the casket, and it was made of cement. This was unheard of at that time, and the first one that we made in this area in Indiana was in 1917. I don't know whether anybody else is old enough to remember, but they also started to make cement-hulled boats at that time. And we discovered that when they were first made, they would sink.

JK: What would sink? The vaults would sink?

HOLLIS: The vaults would sink and allow water to enter. But, after they were cured, they were as watertight as any steel or porcelain . . .

JK: Was it a matter of curing . . .

HOLLIS: Curing the vaults. And, it was demonstrated at

HOLLIS: one place in Parke County when the funeral was postponed during a terrific rainstorm and the boys had gotten there in the evening to put the vault in the ground. The funeral was supposed to be that afternoon, but they went ahead and put the vault in; and the next morning they went out, and here was the vault floating eight inches out of the ground. So, it gave us all reassurance that the vault was waterproof and would do the job that it was supposed to do.

JK: I see.

HOLLIS: Protect the remains of our loved ones.

(Advertisement.)

JK: Now, actually Terre Haute Monument was involved then in the cutting of monuments?

HOLLIS: The cutting of granite, the shaping and forming and polishing, lettering, and the erection of the memorial complete.

JK: The monument. For our purpose how would you describe a monument?

HOLLIS: A monument as differentiated from a marker . . . a monument is a family or a large, comparatively speaking, a large piece of granite or other material. They used white bronze at that time and marble.

JK: White . . .

HOLLIS: Some white bronze . . .

JK: . . . bronze?

HOLLIS: It was a mixture of zinc and was cast.

JK: Did they use anything else besides granite and white bronze?

HOLLIS: And copper. Copper. Copper and bronze. Also marble, limestone, and sandstone.

And it was discovered, of course, that the copper and the bronze were not practical because even if they didn't wear out or didn't become disfigured, they could be stolen and remelted so the granite prevailed

HOLLIS: because there was no way to use a piece of granite after it has the name and information inscribed on it. It costs more to erase that and resurface it than the granite would be worth after you've got it.

Granite has no intrinsic value. In fact, it's a nuisance unless it's cut, polished, and the information put on it. The ancients used the granite (and we sometimes wonder how they did it) for the construction of the pyramids and for the construction of the tombs of the bulls in Egypt, which in some people's opinion is a greater accomplishment physically than the construction of the pyramids. They'd cut the sarcophagi out of Aswan granite big enough to put in a large-size bull in one piece. In other words, /they would/ hollow it out six feet deep and twelve to fifteen feet long and four to eight feet wide, and then /they would/ cut a cover to cover over this and put the bull that had died that they worshipped. /It/ had to have a certain number of white hairs, a black bull with white hair in the center of its forehead. And those were lowered into the ground in a tunnel.

And the tombs of the bulls is still there in Egypt at Memphis. And you go down about a hundred feet in the steps, and then this tunnel is about a mile or less long, and the tombs of the bulls are lined up in this tunnel. You can see the decline of the civilization by the decline of the material and the workmanship in the tombs of the bulls. The first ones were of Aswan granite, were beautifully worked and were great. Then they finally deteriorated to a . . . /they/ made the walls thinner, and they cut them out of limestone that was available there in Egypt or a sandstone that was available in Egypt, which was much easier to cut.

The pyramids were cased in this Aswan granite, as I understand it. But as the people needed granite or needed building material, rather than go up the river as far as they would have to go to Aswan and float it down, they would go grab a piece of granite off the pyramids and use it in construction, rather than going after it. There's no telling how many relics in this area there are that are lost to us, because I have seen piers that are actually nothing but anchors for boats made out of some of the most

HOLLIS: beautiful marble pillars that had been made by the Romans and by the Greeks. /They had been/ just thrown over because they /later civilizations/ didn't particularly worship that particular god that the ones that were worshipping then -- thrown over and used in construction in a rough, rough way.

JK: I see. So, actually then, a monument is something a little different than a marker. This is what you're saying?

HOLLIS: That's right. A marker is the individual marker for a resting place of one particular person. That is, it is considered in the industry this way. A memorial is . . . or a monument, rather, is a family monument that contains the family name and perhaps the names of the rest of the family. A memorial can be either one of them or both of them.

JK: I see. I see.

HOLLIS: A sarcophagus is a container for one body that is constructed above the ground.

A mausoleum is a structure that contains places for more bodies -- two or three or four or more bodies. And then, of course, they have the community mausoleums today which are for innumerable bodies. Up to a thousand bodies can be contained in this one structure if they so wish.

JK: Um hm.

Now, the business, Terre Haute Monument . . . you had made the monuments, is that right?

HOLLIS: Right.

JK: And did you actually have the cutting here?

HOLLIS: We did the forming, the cutting. We had a polishing machine; we had a shaping machine; we had all the tools.

JK: Where did you get the materials from?

HOLLIS: The materials came from Vermont, mainly /and/ from Georgia (Albertyon, Georgia), from Coal Springs, Minnesota, and from St. Cloud, Minnesota. And there

HOLLIS: were other great materials, such as [those] from Quincy, Massachusetts -- which was a dark gray granite and showed a beautiful contrast between the polish and the cut granite. In other words, you could 'skin raise.' By skin raise I mean [if you just] barely break the surface of the polish, [you would] get a terrific contrast between the polish and where you'd cut, which would make the letters read very easily. In other words, you didn't have to go so deep to make a letter show. Just skin the polish off and it would read.

Then there was another granite known as Montello [The sarcophagi in Grant's Tomb are this material.] that came out of Wisconsin. Well, like seams of coal and other natural materials, these sometimes run out. Quincy granite is not obtainable in any sizes any more, and Montello is not obtainable in any size. So their use has been discontinued. In fact, in Wisconsin there have been two that have fallen by the wayside because the quality of the granite that they [had] ran out. In the center of the quarry it had turned sour. Wausau granite is the other one. Of course, each locality may have some particular stone that is a native thing that is a good building stone. We have one in Indiana known as Indiana limestone that the Chicago Tribune Tower was made out of. It's a soft building stone, not used in the monument industry to amount to anything because it wears due to the action of the rain and smoke that causes formation of sulphurous acid that eats the calcium out of marble and out of limestone so the [stone] building won't last.

JK: Now, besides monuments, you were in the vault business . . .

HOLLIS: In the burial vault business, right.

JK: . . . you alluded to earlier. Now for purposes of understanding the difference, a vault holds a casket?

HOLLIS: Underground. Now, a vault as termed a vault, of course, has many meanings. In other words, you can call a burial vault . . . one is a vault that holds one person and is interred as a container for the casket in the ground. Other people . . .

JK: Now, what would that be made out of?

HOLLIS: It would be made out of concrete, /But it/ could be made out of concrete, porcelain, cast iron, steel, whatever material a person had available.

JK: And that was a container for the casket which bore the body?

HOLLIS: Yes. And the casket contained a body. And it, of course, can be made out of wood, out of steel, out of plastic. There have been very many materials used in building the casket. So, you have the option of having whatever you want in a vault or /casket/ .

JK: And what kind of other vaults were you talking about?

HOLLIS: Then the vault can be used as a broader term and include mausoleum and multiple burials.

JK: Now did your firm make these?

HOLLIS: We made these. We made the individual vaults, and if you use the term as vault to mean mausoleum, we also made vault mausoleums and vault sarcophagi. I would have to look it up in the dictionary to really give you a definition of vault because it also refers sometimes to a bank vault.

JK: Yes. Well, I . . . (laughs)

HOLLIS: (laughs) Which I'm not very well acquainted with.

JK: Now, do you find now . . . your father started the business in 1901, and you came back from Barre, Vermont. About what time was this?

HOLLIS: I came back from Barre, Vermont, in 1927. And my father passed away in nineteen hundred and thirty-two. That was the year that the Depression really hit the Middle West when corn went to eight cents a bushel, and we were in a business that was more barter than it was buying and selling.

JK: Now, at the time you joined the company your father was the president of the company, is that right?

HOLLIS: Right.

JK: And about how many employees did they have at that time?

HOLLIS: We had from 15 to 25 depending upon the year that it was. I mean it fluctuated. We'd have, say, nine cutters, a polisher, and two or three what we call "lumpers." Now, a lumper is a man that goes around and picks up the off fall (they are pieces that fall, that a cutter knocks off) so he won't step on one and stumble. And he uses a crane to bring to the cutters the pieces of granite that they're to work on.

JK: I see.

HOLLIS: Those are lumpers.

JK: Lumpers.

HOLLIS: And then crane men were the men that ran the crane that hauled the granite to the individual cutter and to the polisher and to the saw and to the riprap /heavy cutting/ machine.

JK: Um hm.

HOLLIS: So, it was quite a complicated thing. Now, you won't find manufacturing done like this in this area or practically any other area but around the quarries because the freight rates have become prohibitive in shipping granite in larger pieces where you have a great deal to take off before you get down to what you want to actually use.

The peculiar part about freight rates -- they were set by Congress, of course, /and/ regulated with the railroads. We had a senator from Vermont by the name of /Redfield/ Proctor and a senator /Representative/ from Georgia by the name of /C. Farish/ Tate. And, they were both in the marble business. Tate of Georgia had a quarry known as Georgia Marble Company, and they got the Congress to set a lower rate for freight shipment of these marble pieces, which were much easier damaged than granite. /The rate was/ lower than the price of the cost of the tariff of granite being shipped. In other words, marble, if

HOLLIS: you hit a corner on it, it was damaged; and the railroads would become liable for the damage. Whereas in granite, you could run a rough piece of granite over the railroad, throw it off the car and put it back on, and there was no damage and they couldn't be sued for any damage. [There would be none!]

JK: I see.

HOLLIS: This is known, I suppose, as local enhancement of industry by the senator or Congress. That took care of it. But it's real silly.

JK: So, then when you joined the company, what was your position with the company?

HOLLIS: I was flunky and water boy at first.

JK: Um hm.

HOLLIS: And after they got used to me, then I became a cutter again. And then after my father passed away, I fell into the position of being active president at 26 years of age. Back in those days, anybody that young was not supposed to do anything that amounted to anything, and I didn't. In fact, it was predicted that we'd be broke in six months after I took it.

JK: (laughs) Now you

HOLLIS: The presidency.

JK: Well, at the time you took over, you talked about the Depression, and I want to get back to that. Is there any . . . you talked about payment, did you have any difficulty in payment of monuments or vaults or stones?

HOLLIS: There wasn't anything but difficulty in payments of stones. People wanted memorials and at that time there wasn't much insurance, so you traded. I traded for mules, for cows, for certain number of hundreds of pounds of hogs; I traded for real estate and traded for furniture. So, this was a matter of barter rather than anything else in the low times of industry. I remember before this when money was

HOLLIS: used as money, my father set a memorial down in Clay City, and the farmers at that time -- and a lot of the people in Terre Haute -- paid in gold, in gold pieces. They accumulated these gold pieces. And, you brought home \$575 in gold, 20-dollar gold pieces, and 5 /-dollar gold pieces/; and we pulled the curtains down and counted this glittering gold after he had gotten back from collecting from this farmer for his 575-dollar monument. But that was unusual. Unusual things like that often happened. We traded for bonds. We traded for building and loan stock. But now, of course, if you haven't got the cash, don't talk to us.

JK: (laughs) I see.

HOLLIS: (laughs)

JK: But then you were with the company all these years and have there been any changes over the years in the nature and kind of monuments and vaults? I mean preferences or . . .

HOLLIS: Monuments have changed over the years because of machinery advancement in cutting, in quarrying, and in lettering. It has changed greatly. In other words, the only thing that your monument man does today is ship in the finished product minus the lettering, and the lettering is done -- or the etching or the sandblasting, whatever term you use, to put this information on the granite -- is done at his particular place. In other words, the sandblast is the only thing that a monument dealer now usually possesses.

JK: Um hm.

HOLLIS: There may be isolated cases of manufacturing, but they are really isolated because /of shipping costs/.

JK: So actually, what you're saying is that /when/ you purchase a monument now, that monument is made elsewhere. /It is/ shipped /to/ this community and actually only the lettering is done.

HOLLIS: The lettering is done here. Of course . . .

JK: What I was asking is, . . . and . . . this is interesting, but over the years has there been any change in what people want for monuments? Size,

JK: type, nature . . .?

HOLLIS: The size has been governed by the times. In other words, custom is one thing and you see it in the cemetery. It's no better expressed than in the cemeteries.

You see some cemeteries with these tall, pointed memorials known as obelisks. And the first obelisk was copied, naturally, after the obelisks such as Cleopatra's needle and copied in a small way from the four-sided obelisk -- tall pyramids -- that were used in the olden days; and they continued on down through into the 1890's and that sort of thing. And the heavy pieces of granite . . . because you couldn't quarry it any thinner, the heavier pieces of granite were used for that.

Then somebody conceived the idea that people didn't need to have this sort of thing, and they have their opinion and their right. And Roselawn-type cemeteries . . . I say Roselawn-type cemeteries. This is not a particular name.

JK: You're speaking of Roselawn Memorial Park?

HOLLIS: They like the idea of getting away from the harsh sound of cemetery, saying park instead. They can call it a park or call it whatever the hell they want to, but it's still a cemetery. It's the place for interment of human remains. And they used small, flat markers that didn't stick above the ground so that they could . . .

JK: Flush, they call these flush?

HOLLIS: They could be called flush markers, although they shouldn't be set quite flush because they will sink. After you've set a piece of granite which is heavy (about 150 lbs. per cubic foot), they will sink, and the grass will grow up around them a little no matter how much you try not to have it to happen to it. So the flush marker has not been too successful because -- in other cemeteries -- because the grass mats up around them and unless you have a substantial concrete foundation, they will sink and, therefore, disappear. So the yen or the fashion of memorial-type cemeteries has been cut

HOLLIS: off a little bit because of that. Not saying that they're not going on; this will continue just as the traditional type cemetery with the monuments and with the mausoleums will continue, because we'll have people that still have different opinions.

Of course, the reason that granite can be cut to these thicknesses now is because of the development of the granite saw which was invented in 1914 -- along in there -- and was steel shot and used to cut the granite into thinner pieces. There is no other reason that we have thinner memorials, except the fact that in quarrying you had to hold the piece of granite to a foot to a foot-and-a-half thick to keep it from running off the grain and coming to a point. So you quarried in big blocks and then saw it. There you're assured of uniform thicknesses of the material.

Now, the memorial is made for permanence. Granite wears about an eighth of an inch in a thousand years. That's according to the United States Bureau of Standards. And that is an average of the way granite wears. The lettering ordinarily is put into the granite over a quarter of an inch deep, which leads us to believe that the lettering will persist on the granite up to four to five thousand years. And this has been proven out by some of the discoveries in the old country and in Egypt where the inscriptions are legible. Where they're protected, even in soft stone, they are legible over a period of thousands of years.

A memorial is a, shall we say, an egotistical thing for a man. But man needs to be egotistical because we were created to recognize one another, to honor one another. And if we just did away with the body after it was through, without any memorialization, then our records and our knowledge of the times gone by would be lost to the times that are coming.

The cemeteries here in this area are: Highland Lawn Cemetery, which is city owned -- along with Woodlawn.

Taste and finances regulate the memorial

HOLLIS: business. Taste to the extent that somebody that may be very well known and very well honored receives only a small memorial because the family feels that that is the way they want them memorialized. But others that are of value to the community are memorialized with larger memorials. The ambassador to Venezuela /Claude G. Bowers/ who came from Terre Haute, his memorial is in Highland Lawn Cemetery and stands about eight to twelve feet high. And Chauncey Rose, who was of great value to Terre Haute, has a large memorial. And sometimes the community gets together and decides that this person needs to be memorialized whether the family has any money or not. And to that extent /was/ the memorial for /Claude/ Herbert who was memorialized because he ran the elevator in the fire in the department store /Havens & Geddes/ here. He continued to run the elevator until he was killed, and so that memorial was erected to him. /It used to be at 5th and Wabash and is now between the Court House and the city building./

JK: So, over the years, there's been no constancy? We still have large memorials going up?

HOLLIS: There are three classes of memorials -- none, a small memorial, a large memorial. Now, those are ways that we feel and are done accordingly, as I say . . .

JK: What about those who are buried in mausoleums?

HOLLIS: Well, of course, when you have a mausoleum Each one of us has our own idea of the way we feel about being put in . . . I know that there are people that abhor the idea of being lowered into the ground. Other people see nothing wrong with being lowered into the ground. But the people that abhor the idea of being in the ground -- and if they have enough money -- can erect a mausoleum where their remains will be forever protected, encased in marble and in granite. I've heard people say, "Well, that money would do well to be spent for other things." That's not the point. It's the person's wish to be dry and to have their body not go to mud or to the worms or whatever that happens to you in the ground, so they have their mausoleums built. And over the periods of thousands of years, as we've seen when they brought the remains of the mummies out of the

HOLLIS: Egyptian tombs, they're fairly well preserved. And I think it is entirely up to the individual, as it has been over the period of ages, to have what they want in the way of memorials.

JK: Have you noticed any change over the years in a choice of the type of burial? I mean more of one kind. I'm talking about being buried in a conventional way in a vault and a casket in a cemetery or being buried in a mausoleum. Have you noticed anything?

HOLLIS: There are two things that govern this, Joe. The cemeteries sometimes require now . . . not sometimes, most cemeteries /now/ require a concrete container or you could call it, a vault. These are not put together so that they're waterproof. They're slabs of concrete that are laid /as a box/. But the reason for that is that it stops the grave from falling in, from falling in the number of times it would have to with a wooden box. With a wooden box you would have about three falling /ins/ or three depths that the grave would fall into. After the collapse of the box, it would go down four or five inches. After the collapse of the casket, it would go down four or five inches. After the collapse of the body, it would go down another four or five inches. So naturally, to run a cemetery, you have to have it all fairly level, and you can't afford to have any holes that people can step in. So, these concrete boxes are required to hold the level of the ground. With them /concrete boxes/, there's only one sinkage after the first rain. Then you can have the grave filled and the grass can be grown over it and it's a lot easier taken care of.

JK: What depth would this box be?

HOLLIS: The /Indiana/ state law requires the depth from the top of the box /to be/ at 30 inches below the surface of the ground.

JK: Thirty inches.

HOLLIS: Thirty inches below the level of the ground. And, of course, the improvement on that from the concrete, six-piece box -- which is just a box -- to a vault, which is fairly waterproof, to an extraordinary vault, which is more waterproof, to a

HOLLIS: mausoleum are the different steps that one can take. And it's again all according to a matter of taste. I've seen . . .

JK: You notice I say, has there been any change from one kind of burial to the other? Did you notice anything?

HOLLIS: Oh, yes. Oh, this was great . . . coming from this wooden box, because in some cemeteries down along the river the groundhogs (which are the worst) would dig down into the boxes and perhaps bring out human skulls and human bones up on top of the ground after burial. And this was very disconcerting, to go into a cemetery and find a skull lying on top of the ground. So the advance of the concrete boxes was very fast after that.

The matter of cremation is another thing that people have accepted.

END OF SIDE 1

TAPE 1-SIDE 2

HOLLIS: Cremation has advanced in use because of the fact that there are more people and there are more diversified opinions, and so there are more people that accept cremation. In the Bible it says, "Though I give my body to be burned," and it wasn't acceptable in some cases in the Bible to have a body burned. In fact, I don't believe that it is really acceptable in the Jewish religion at the present time to have your body burned. And it's not too acceptable in the /Roman/ Catholic religion. But this again is a matter of opinion, and some of the modern ideas have accepted cremation. And then the remains, the ashes, can be put into what they call "urns" and the urns placed in a columbarium. A columbarium can be one or more or a family of remains that can be buried in the ground and a marker put just as if the full body were there.

When cremation first started, of course, like everything else that is new, there were a lot of people that were against it. And they used stories against it. They told the story of the first cremation in a family up in Milwaukee. This brother

HOLLIS: and sister were a maiden lady and a bachelor, and they agreed to be cremated. And at that time, they had a mica window in the oven that they cremated the body. So . . .

JK: You could watch the cremation?!

HOLLIS: You could watch the cremation through this mica window. So they agreed that whichever one went first, the other one would watch the cremation and be sure that they were dead before cremation.

So, she passed away first and he watched the cremation. Well, in the contraction of the body in the heat, she seemed to raise up and turn her head towards the window and raise one hand as if in a salute of good-bye. He went out on the corners of Milwaukee and preached against cremation. And it set cremation back a number of years, because they feared that they cremated somebody that was still alive. This was not true, but it was the contraction of the muscles in the body as the heat got to it.

JK: Did you say cremation as a type of burial has gained?

HOLLIS: No. I don't think, Joe, that it's gained. It has held its own in that the population has grown and in proportion, I wouldn't say that it has gained anything.

JK: And the other types of burials, you would say, would be about the same?

HOLLIS: About the same. And the ones that are in the memorial parks . . . and I think you will find this will continue on. There is some question about taking good land to use for cemeteries, but the cemetery requires for each burial only a four by eight or a four by ten foot spot. You can put a thousand graves and leave room for roads in an acre of ground. Of course, that gives you very few thousand acres that are going to be used for cemeteries compared with what we take up with paved roads and highways and accesses and that sort of thing.

JK: Now, while we're on the subject of burials, is

JK: there any sealing process on the vault itself? A required process or . . .

HOLLIS: No. There's no required . . .

JK: No required? Is there a process that is used generally?

HOLLIS: Yes, there is a process. Now there are two different types of burial vaults. We're speaking of the type that goes in the ground.

The air seal requires no plastic or cement but acts on the principle of the diving bell that they use to construct piers on the bottoms of lakes and rivers where they're building bridges. They trap the air in a bell. The air is trapped in the vault, and the air pressure inside the vault keeps the water from rising to any extent inside the vault, because the air pressure holds it back. Now, that's an air seal.

Now, the other vaults are sealed either with cement or with a plastic around the top where the one piece fits into the other. And as I say, the air seal is the biggest part of the vault . . . is the actual bell. The flat vault, it is like a box and the body is lowered into the box, and the lid is then like a lid on a box. And that's cemented or plastic.

JK: Does that hold pretty good?

HOLLIS: It holds pretty good. Then, in some cases, you find some leakage but not all. So, it's fairly good use of . . .

JK: Does that set up immediately?

HOLLIS: Yes. It sets up immediately.

The first vaults were sealed with cement, and this set up very hard. In fact, it set up as hard as the vault did. In one particular case I remember, there was a lady that was buried with a very valuable diamond ring on her hand. The funeral director had mistakenly understood the family that they wanted it left on or had forgotten to take the diamond ring off. So, we were asked to go over

HOLLIS: there after a few days and open this vault up. And it required a granite cutter to cut through this seal to get to the body to remove the ring from the lady's hand and give it back to the family. So . . .

JK: It really set up pretty good then? (laughs)
Now, do you notice . . . could you tell us . . .

HOLLIS: The question of grave robbers comes up.

JK: Yes, what about grave robbers?

HOLLIS: This used to be done because the medical students needed cadavers, and medical schools needed cadavers. And they would go out at night before embalming was too much used and before there were any vaults, and they would dig up some of the cadavers or some of the bodies that were buried before they deteriorated and fill the grave back up and not leave any tracks, and take the cadaver and use it in medical school for research. This was a great scandal.

JK: Did any of this happen in the Terre Haute area that you know of?

HOLLIS: I wouldn't say so, Joe. If I knew, I wouldn't say so. (chuckles)

JK: If you knew, you (chuckles) wouldn't say so.
Were there robbings for any other . . .

HOLLIS: Oh, yes. Of course, the great robbery is the robbery of the tombs of the pharaohs and the old tombs. And we're getting into some of the viking tombs now, and the gold and the utensils that were buried In other words, people were buried with the things that they thought they would need in the after-life, and the trappings of the pharaoh contained many pots of gold and many of the things that he needed to worship with and that sort of thing.

JK: Well, why would they rob graves that, you know, in the area now or in the time . . .

HOLLIS: The only reason that they would rob a grave now would be if there was a rumor that there was

HOLLIS: some valuable piece of jewelry or some question of something valuable in the grave. They do have removals and excavations to remove bodies for several reasons. Some people want to go to other cemeteries. Sometimes a person is buried without a full information of the way they died, and they're exhumed to examine the corpse to see why they died or if there's a lawsuit on, about where a bullet entered or so on and so on. Many reasons that they could do this.

JK: Now, getting back to monuments and vaults, could you give us, in the time that you were in the business, what the early costs were for, say, the vault and the monument as compared to more recent days?

HOLLIS: Yes. The earlier costs . . . the boxes cost \$10. That was a wooden box. A box today costs \$105 or \$110 which . . .

JK: A vault box?

HOLLIS: The box. \$105 or \$110, which is just a box. In other words, six pieces of concrete fitted together in a box runs \$105 to \$145.

The vaults sold for, wholesale, for \$45. Now they sell for \$150 to \$200 up to \$600, \$700.

The mausoleums could go from . . . we could go to a \$10,000 mausoleum that would have six crypts in it. Now I would suspect that the least cost would be \$30,000.

JK: And what did it cost before?

HOLLIS: Ten thousand.

JK: Ten thousand, about triple the cost.

HOLLIS: Yes.

JK: Would you say that's generally so? The monuments and vaults have tripled in cost then over the period of time you were . . .

HOLLIS: Oh, yes. They've tripled and . . . five times, I think in . . . they've gone inflated as

HOLLIS: much as any other item that we know about. But not . . . I say they haven't increased as much in this inflationary time as other articles. In other words, automobiles and anything else that we use have increased much farther than memorials. I don't understand this because memorials, the cost to the manufacturer has increased that much excepting the refinement in machinery has helped hold the cost down to where it is, I'd say, on an average of five times what the cost was before inflation started.

JK: Now, you were speaking about grave robbing in cemeteries, could you give us . . . how many cemeteries are there in this area and the names of a few -- names and locations and the size of them?

HOLLIS: Yes. The largest cemetery is Highland Lawn Cemetery which contains two Jewish sections and the section . . .

JK: Highland Lawn is?

HOLLIS: Highland Lawn.

JK: Where is that located?

HOLLIS: Highland Lawn is at 4700 Wabash Avenue. /It is in/ the east end of town on the north side of state road 40. Calvary Cemetery /is on the south side/.

JK: How large a cemetery in size?

HOLLIS: A hundred and sixty-five . . . a hundred and sixty-five acres.

JK: A hundred and sixty-five acres.

HOLLIS: In other words, you could bury 165,000 people there, more or less, and I'd say there are more people in Highland Lawn Cemetery than there are in Terre Haute.

JK: How many are there now?

HOLLIS: Sixty-five to seventy thousand, as I understand it.

JK: Then, across the road from them is Calvary Cemetery which is primarily a Catholic cemetery.

HOLLIS: And then on North 3rd Street is Woodlawn Cemetery which contains . . .

JK: Was Calvary always a Catholic cemetery?

HOLLIS: Calvary was always a Catholic cemetery. It was started by the diocese and . . .

JK: Indianapolis archdiocese?

HOLLIS: Yes, Indianapolis archdiocese.
And Woodlawn . . .

JK: Is that restricted to Catholics?

HOLLIS: No, it's not restricted to Catholics. There are sections where you can bury non-Catholics. In fact, there is in Calvary Cemetery a Jewish person who has a star of David on his memorial. It was removed from the Jewish cemetery because his wife wanted a cross on hers and she was Catholic and he was Jewish. And they didn't want the cross in the Jewish cemetery, so she removed him to the Catholic cemetery where she could have the star of David on him and the cross for Christianity on hers.

JK: Now, Calvary is across the road (Wabash Avenue, U.S. 40) from Highland Lawn.

HOLLIS: Yes.

JK: And what is its size?

HOLLIS: Its size is about 55 acres.

JK: Fifty-five . . .

HOLLIS: And it has, I'd say, from 3500 to 4,000 burials -- maybe even more. That's only an educated guess on that.

JK: So there's room in both of those cemeteries for more?

HOLLIS: There's room in both of those cemeteries. Yeah.

JK: Can people still purchase?

HOLLIS: Oh, yes. They're still buying in both cemeteries.

JK: And Highland Lawn is operated by?

HOLLIS: Highland Lawn is operated under /the city/. . . Highland Lawn and Woodlawn, which is the cemetery that you see on North 3rd Street -- about 3rd and Eighth Avenue. That is also a city cemetery. Those are the two city cemeteries.

JK: Two city cemeteries.

HOLLIS: They are operated by the city and the board of regents is appointed by the mayor, and the superintendent is supposed to be appointed by the board of regents. However, this is not so. The mayor appoints the superintendent for the cemeteries, just as he appoints the superintendent for parks.

Then there is St. Joseph, as I say, is a corner of Woodlawn Cemetery. That's the Catholic part of Woodlawn Cemetery. There's an area there in the northwest corner.

Then there's Grandview Cemetery, which had been started by the /Red Men Lodge/.

JK: Where's that located?

HOLLIS: That's located on 19th and Lockport Road.

JK: Is that a city . . . ?

HOLLIS: No, no. This is a private cemetery.

JK: Private. Grandview is private then.

HOLLIS: And, of course, there is Bethesda. It's a private cemetery. Stewart Lawn which is a black cemetery. Oak . . .

JK: Where is Stewart Lawn?

HOLLIS: Stewart Lawn is east of town about three miles /and/ north of /U.S./ 40 about eight miles out.

Riley has Oak Hill Cemetery and then there's Markle Cemetery, which is named after the Markle family who had the mill . . .

JK: Where's that located?

HOLLIS: . . . It's on North Fruitridge.

JK: How far?

HOLLIS: It's across from the north end of the Tumpane reservation and across from the Smith farm.

Then, of course, Roselawn Cemetery Park -- they like to be called Roselawn Park -- is north of town, north on /U.S./ 41, the old 41, and there's plenty of room up there. That is where the markers are placed flush, placed flush with the top of the ground so that they can cut over them with a lawn mower.

Now the city cemeteries will probably have to expand or gain new ground someplace if they continue in the way they are, because they will run out of ground in another ten years.

JK: Ten years.

HOLLIS: But Roselawn has plenty of ground. But the city cemeteries should be . . . the people should be looking forward to either addition which could be gained by taking the Jewish Country Club, Phoenix Country Club, or by acquiring land someplace else and starting a new cemetery.

JK: Woodlawn is the oldest. You say there is a Catholic section of Woodlawn?

HOLLIS: Yes.

JK: Only Catholics are buried in this section?

HOLLIS: Only Catholics are buried in that particular section.

JK: Now, is Woodlawn pretty well filled?

HOLLIS: Woodlawn is pretty well filled. There are, naturally . . . in certain lots there are certain graves left where the family hasn't used all the lots that they own. And the families have moved away before they used them up and that sort of thing. Or the family dies out.

JK: Now, talking about cemeteries, are there children's sections in any of these cemeteries? Are there pets in any of the . . .

- HOLLIS: No pets, Joe! No pets.
- JK: Are there pet cemeteries?
- HOLLIS: There are pet cemeteries.
- JK: How many of these do we have?
- HOLLIS: Two, that I know of -- one down by the Humane Society and one over west of town.
- JK: Um hm.
- HOLLIS: Now, those are pet cemeteries. And there are monkeys and dogs and cats and so forth buried that have been pets.
- JK: What about children's sections in regular cemeteries?
- HOLLIS: There is a children's section in Highland Lawn and in Roselawn where children are buried. Of course, this would preclude the fact that they had a family lot that they . . . so they didn't have any place to put their children, and they put them in these children's sections. And, of course, it's a matter of taste. Some people want their children together and other people don't. So that again is a matter of taste.
- JK: Are there religious sections in any of these cemeteries?
- HOLLIS: Oh, yes. There are religious sections. There are even sections that go for unions. The typographical union has a section in Highland Lawn that they . . . the ones that want to be buried with In other words, if they were strong union men and didn't want to be buried in their family plot, they'd bury them there; and the bachelors that were in the trade would be buried there.
- And, of course, Joe, there is the Elks /B.P.O.E./ section in Highland Lawn Cemetery where only Elks can be buried. Now, there are no wives or anything in that /section/.
- JK: Are there still spaces available in all these sections you're talking about?

HOLLIS: Thre are spaces available.

JK: Well, what about the care and maintenance of a plot in the various cemeteries you spoke of?

HOLLIS: There are various ways of having a lot taken care of. Of course, the city cemetery will always have to take care of their lots, because they belong to the city. And what is not collected in revenue must come from the tax structure to keep the cemetery decent, to keep it up. Although there are very, very many trusts In fact, we have over \$150,000 invested from people who have left money to take care of their individual lots in Highland Lawn.

 Roselawn advertises perpetual care. I don't know how they expect to guarantee this.

JK: This is part of the burial costs?

HOLLIS: Cost. This is part of the costs.

JK: It is not a continuing cost from year to year?

HOLLIS: No. All one.

JK: Just one flat cost?

HOLLIS: And people leave flat sums. The others . . . there's one particular person (if you don't mind my mentioning a name) Ben Blumberg left \$10,000 for the continuing care of his mausoleum and lot in Highland Lawn Cemetery. And then we have other various bequests from \$500 to \$250 to a thousand dollars, fifteen hundred dollars for the protection and care of those particular lots.

 Now, in the old type cemetery, of course, the care was up to the individual family who was left living. And they cared for their lots individually. That's why you see some spotted lots that are very well cared for and other places that are grown up in weeds and briars. So this . . .

JK: The family then had the responsibility.

HOLLIS: Had the responsibility of the . . .

JK: We don't have much of this though in our city

JK: cemeteries or our private cemeteries any more?

HOLLIS: Oh, yes, you'll find some people that go out to Highland Lawn and take care of their own little plot much better than it is taken care of. They like to have little things like small vases and put flowers [there] and keep the grass cut neatly down around And some of them are very good examples (are beautiful examples) to the rest of us of how to care for a lot.

JK: Now, another point about cemeteries, can you recall damage being done to tombstones by tornadoes or individuals or some kind of vandalism or thefts that you would think of?

HOLLIS: Vandalism looked at one time as if it would be a problem, but I don't think that it's going to be now. I think the kids have finally gotten away from it, but they get into the beer and get out in one of these cemeteries; and they think they're playing football and they tackle . . . they're real tough and they tackle and block against some monuments that are perhaps a little frail and knock them over.

JK: Have we had incidents of this?

HOLLIS: Oh, yes. We've had incidents of this.

JK: In what cemeteries?

HOLLIS: Well, I'd rather not . . . oh, I will say. In Mount Pleasant Cemetery, in particular, there was a group that got in there and . . .

JK: Where's Mount Pleasant?

HOLLIS: Mount Pleasant is below Terre Haute to the east of 25th Street about three miles out of town.

JK: I see.

HOLLIS: But the families of the kids that did it . . . the kids were caught and the families replaced everything and put it all back into shape, so there wasn't too much furor about that.

JK: What about tornadoes or damage?

HOLLIS: In Highland Lawn Cemetery they had this one cannon in the soldiers' section that they had there for years and years and years. It was about eight feet long and some of the kids got the bright idea of getting some fertilizer that was explosive; and they rammed this fertilizer down in the cannon's mouth and ran a fuse to it, and it (chuckles) blew that cannon apart.

JK: (chuckles) Oh, my goodness.

HOLLIS: It threw one piece of it that would weigh about 60 pounds about, I'd say, almost an eight of a mile to fall on a cover -- /a / ledger, granite ledger -- that broke. It was that heavy that it broke the ledger. So, when they put the cannon back . . .

JK: Did they catch the people that did it?

HOLLIS: Oh, yeah, they caught the people that did it, and they replaced the ledger. And when they replaced the cannon -- put it back together -- they filled the mouth of it up with cement. There's no opening to ram any gunpowder or anything . . .

JK: Is this cannon still in Highland . . .

HOLLIS: Still in Highland Lawn soldiers' section where the soldiers are buried in a circle around this cannon and flagpole.

JK: And what about weather? Tornadoes or . . .

HOLLIS: In 1950, we had a destructive tornado that hit Deming Park and hit Calvary Cemetery and hit Highland Lawn Cemetery, and it did quite a bit of damage in Calvary Cemetery. It tore down several monuments. But the peculiar part about this, these mausoleums that we talked about, these family mausoleums look as if they'd be victims of this sort of thing; but instead of that, it would pile up debris -- trees and other things -- at the back of them and there wasn't even a windowlight that was broken out of any of the mausoleums. It went over three or four mausoleums and no damage. But the cross that was on the Hulman family lot, which weighed we figured from ten to eighteen tons and was mitred down into the base about six inches, was lifted up bodily by this tornado. Just lifted it up in one piece and then slammed /it / down over six or seven graves, driving these markers

HOLLIS: and the foundations down into the ground about two feet. And that shows how destructive /it can be/. And there were spires, these obelisks that were 16 or 30 feet high, and some of those were turned over.

JK: These were all damaged? Were they replaced?

HOLLIS: They were damaged. They were replaced except where the spire was completely broken up, and those were removed and the bottom part of them left. We had cranes and everything immediately out there to replace and to do the job of cleaning up.

So, while there is that part happening, it's not too often.

JK: We're speaking of cemeteries and, of course, those that you've worked with. Have there been any changes in causes of deaths as listed on the death records or in the cemeteries?

HOLLIS: This is an historic fact that in Woodlawn Cemetery where the records go back to before the city was formed in 1816, the common thing for children's death . . . and there were innumerable babies that died of what they called "summer complaint." They had no other explanation, no other reason for it.

JK: What particular years are you talking about?

HOLLIS: Well, we're talking in the early 1800's and really up to 1900, 1905, 1910.

JK: Summer complaint.

HOLLIS: Summer complaint. And then for older people -- from, oh, 45 up -- it was "acute indigestion." Well, they discovered what acute indigestion was. Acute indigestion turns out to be heart failure, but they complained of indigestion, and then they wrote on the death certificates "acute indigestion." So the medical profession has advanced greatly. There are no more "summer complaints" on death records of children. This is not used. They have to explain exactly . . .

JK: Did they use this term for adults -- summer complaint?

HOLLIS: No.

JK: Just children.

HOLLIS: Just children seemed to be . . . there were very few adults that died of summer complaint.

JK: Was summer complaint something they were complaining about? Is that where it came from?

HOLLIS: No, no, no. The children were too young to complain. They just . . . they'd break out with the heat, and naturally I suppose the doctors The development in medical science has been so tremendous, so great, very great. We don't realize it and you can see it just by going back into these records. What people passed away with; and dropsy was a great cause for death. You very seldom see dropsy any more. Dropsy has been rehandled. And . . . as I say, acute indigestion and sugar diabetes and . . . I mean, these things we've gotten around to where we control. And smallpox, smallpox was a great killer in those days. And, of course, when you died with smallpox, they buried you, and it was a private service, and nobody was allowed, and you had to get a permit from the city to remove any body; so if they died of smallpox, it was not allowed to move that body.

JK: I see.

HOLLIS: So that was . . .

JK: Well, where can you find these records, these cemetery records, in Terre Haute?

HOLLIS: Records have been moved to Highland Lawn, the office at Highland Lawn Cemetery. Most of them.

JK: All of them are at Highland Lawn or just for that one cemetery?

HOLLIS: No. They're for Woodlawn, too. So we could . . .

JK: For Woodlawn and Highland Lawn. What about Calvary's?

HOLLIS: Calvary has their own set of records. Now we . . .

JK: Are there any city records that are combined?

HOLLIS: Board of Health. Board of Health has records on this same thing. Records of births and deaths and that sort of thing. And so, there are a couple of ways to check this thing out.

JK: Well, we're talking about cemeteries. Are there some interesting things that you might tell us about cemeteries?

HOLLIS: Oh, there are a lot of interesting things that happened.

The mausoleum that was erected to Mark Sheets here in Highland Lawn had an article . . . they had an article in the Chicago Tribune that he had a telephone in his mausoleum so /that/ if he happened to wake up after death, he could phone out. This was untrue. Some reporter from Chicago had peered into this mausoleum; and he, Mr. Sheets, had a crystal chandelier of which he was very fond, so he had it removed from the house that he sold and put in the vestibule of the mausoleum. He looked in the mausoleum and said, "Well, he's got electric lights so he must have a telephone in there." So, that was the way that was published.

Then there's another mausoleum that you can see a Boston terrier, a stuffed Boston terrier. This was a dog that belonged to the family and they had it stuffed.

JK: Where is this located?

HOLLIS: In Highland Lawn Cemetery.

JK: Highland Lawn.

HOLLIS: Of course, this smacks of paganism because back in the old days if some mogul died, they killed enough handmaidens and assistants to send along with him so he'd be taken care of after death. And they were buried; and in view, they burned the servants -- some of the servants - even the wife! So this is just a holdover from that time.

JK: Are there any instances of . . . I've heard sometimes of even locks being broken or something . . .

HOLLIS: Oh, the curiosity has caused a lot of things. They broke in one mausoleum in Woodlawn Cemetery where the door had been made of wood and the wood was good and intact; it was good hard wood. But the vandals broke it open out of curiosity. Then they broke open a two-and-a-half inch thick marble crypt closure and pulled the casket out on the floor and broke it open. And the man had been dead since 1865 and this was 1939. When they pulled him out on the floor or broke the casket open, he had on a bow tie; and you could recognize . . . anybody that had known him when he was alive would have known him when he was dead. His bow tie was still intact.

JK: I get it.

HOLLIS: So, there were peculiar things that happened on all those things.

JK: Are there any preferences as the way families are buried . . .

HOLLIS: In Woodlawn again, there is a mausoleum where the casket is not put in a crypt. It's put on angle irons; and before the family leaves, they require the funeral director to break the locks on the casket so when resurrection comes, there's no lock on that casket so they can get out. They can rise.

JK: Rise to heaven.

HOLLIS: This is not only in that particular one but in another mausoleum or two. People require that the locks be broken on the casket so that they go home feeling that the loved one is not locked up where they couldn't get out if they wanted to.

Back in the old days, Joe, there was a great deal and a lot of talk about being buried alive. This was a great fear -- to be buried alive. And there were tales of people that were buried and when they'd dig them up that they'd have scratches on their face and they'd clawed the inside of their casket because they weren't dead and had awakened while they were in their grave. Of course, this is precluded today by the embalming process where they take all your blood out and put formaldehyde or a mixture of formaldehyde into your veins. So you're going to be pretty tough if you can circulate that formaldehyde and breathe and live. But

HOLLIS: that was really a fear back in the old days, being buried alive.

JK: Well, Jim, we've talked a great deal about the business, and you were in it a great number of years. You've told us many interesting things about cemeteries, vaults, and monuments. I want to ask you some of your recollections of Terre Haute; you've lived here, you said, all your life. What do you think were some of the most important changes? When did they occur, and maybe, reasons for these changes?

HOLLIS: Well, Terre Haute has evolved in my opinion Now there are historians that can give you the actual turnover and the actual metamorphosis from one thing to another. But as I see it, Terre Haute started out as a farm town, and it was the location of the terminal for hog shipping to New Orleans. The hogs were killed here and fed around here, killed, pickled, and put on barges and sent to New Orleans. It was a river town. And quite a commerce center.

Of course, then the coal mines came in -- the discovery of coal -- and coal was a great factor in the growth of Terre Haute, a great factor. And it got around to the point of where coal was being used here, and it /Terre Haute/ became known as the Pittsburgh of the West because of the smoke that hung over the city.

And we had great industries like the Standard Wheel Works, which was the biggest wheel works in the United States. Of course, it was the wooden wheel that they weremaking. And when steel wheels came along, it put them out of business.

Then, because there was a lot of coal and sand around in this particular area, the glass companies grew up. We had quite a few glass companies.

JK: Which ones do you recall?

HOLLIS: Oh, there was Baltimore Glass and the Root glass factory and two or three other smaller glass factories up in the northeast.

JK: Were these substantial plants?

HOLLIS: Substantial plants. Real substantial plants.

HOLLIS: Of course, Muncie ended up with the Ball family in the Ball fruit jar business, and that could have been here in Terre Haute just as well as in Muncie.

Then the railroad terminals. As the railroads grew in importance, why, we were a terminal for five railroads.

Well, along came the strike in the mines, John L. Lewis . . .

JK: What period are you talking about?

HOLLIS: Nineteen nineteen, that area, that time. And the strong unionization of Terre Haute. We've got beautiful people here and we've got some thoughtful people and people who think about raising the standard of life for everybody. And Eugene V. Debs was one of these. And he was in prison . . .

JK: Did you know Debs?

HOLLIS: I knew him to see him, but that was all.

JK: You never had any association . . .

HOLLIS: I never had any . . . no. I didn't have any particular association because I was too young. And in 1918, I was 13 years old. I wasn't thinking too much about strikes and that sort of thing.

He was put into jail because of the strike. And Terre Haute was on its way to become a metropolis. It was bigger than Indianapolis. It was really, as I say, the Pittsburgh of the West.

Then along came the railroad strike in 1922-23, and the railroads were very unhappy because we had great railroad /centers/ ties here. We had the car works that built cars; we had part of the Pullman . . .

JK: What car?

HOLLIS: Car works, that built railroad cars.

JK: Railroad cars.

HOLLIS: We had roundhouses. This is the terminal where

HOLLIS: they'd /the engines/ end up. The runs were made to St. Louis and to Chicago and to Evansville, and this was the starting place of all those. It was a terminal for five different, big railroads.

JK: You'd do the repairing of the cars here, maintenance . . . ?

HOLLIS: Yes. Repairing of the cars. And the crews would start out here on their runs.

JK: I see.

HOLLIS: And they'd be called out at different times. You could . . . remember wrecking whistles, the wildcat whistles at the mines when there was a disaster. Then the wrecking crew would be called out. They were before the days of the telephone, /before it/ used to amount to anything. There'd probably be one telephone in every hundred thousand /houses/. /So/ you'd hear this, "Whoooe, whoooe, whooo." And that was calling the wrecking crew. /It would/ wake everybody in town up. The wrecking crew then knew to get out of bed and get down there. There was a wreck on the railroad, they had to go to work.

JK: I see.

HOLLIS: With this strike, the railroads became very unhappy with the town; and one of the western road presidents said, "We'll make grass grow in the city of Terre Haute, right in the middle of the street." And he darned well near accomplished it at that time.

This, of course, is open to controversy, and it's open to the question of what kind of a town you wanted to live in. If you wanted to live in an industrial town, then Terre Haute's not the town. If you wanted to -live in a good hometown, Terre Haute is a nice town. Our industry now is real clean -- Columbia Records, Pfizer, Anaconda, and the farm implement place there.

JK: J. I. Case?

HOLLIS: J. I. Case Company. Great companies, real great companies. Of course, at one time we had the biggest greenhouse here in the world. That was the greenhouse down at . . . the Davis company.

JK: Davis Gardens?

HOLLIS: Davis Gardens.

JK: That was located out on . . .

HOLLIS: Out on 7th Street.

JK: Off of South 7th Street.

HOLLIS: South 7th Street. It was the biggest area under glass at one time. It advertised itself.

JK: They produced . . . ?

HOLLIS: Tomatoes, cucumbers, and so forth that were grown under glass.

JK: Bibb lettuce, things of that sort.

HOLLIS: Yeah. They did a great job.

JK: And so we've actually had . . . you're saying we had all of these -- mining business, railroad, meat packing, glass, wheel companies. These were the old firms in Terre Haute plus the river trade.

HOLLIS: Plus the tenderloin section which was great entertainment.

JK: Plus the tenderloin. What do you mean by "tenderloin"?

HOLLIS: Which was a great entertainment section for all the people around that were seeking . . . the men particularly that were seeking entertainment. That's where the houses of prostitution and gambling houses . . .

JK: What part of Terre Haute was this in?

HOLLIS: That was close to the river along 3rd Street. And they had such characters for (what shall we say?) proprietors as Hominy Godsey, Lukie Fogle, Jack Hines. Those are names that . . .

JK: These were proprietors of . . . ?

HOLLIS: Proprietors of the saloons and of the different houses of prostitution. And there was Moot Mushet who ran the Rex Club, and the area of Terre Haute

HOLLIS: to the west had . . .

JK: Now, were some of these just saloons or meeting places . . . ?

HOLLIS: Some of them were just saloons . . .

JK: . . . or places of entertainment, also?

HOLLIS: Places of gambling and entertainment. Saloons and . . . of course, Terre Haute was a wide-open town in those days because it had a population that demanded it and the people from Illinois and surrounding territory looked upon Terre Haute as the place to come for recreation or for any of their activities that they didn't want the people at home to know about.

JK: I see.

HOLLIS: Which is very good. Of course, we all know about Madame Brown and Hobart Gosnell and that sort of thing. This is a matter of record in the Vigo County Historical Society. But there was an area in the West End known as "jockey alley." That was off the Wabash Avenue to the north between 1st and Water. Water Street is . . . 1st Street is not the first street in Terre Haute from the river. Water Street is the first street. Between 1st and Water was this area known as "jockey alley." They'd bring in horses to trade.

And then across the river was Taylorville. And as things got stirrin' pretty good, Taylorville was really the place where the down-right dirty things happened. I mean the people were underprivileged -- terrifically underprivileged. They were very, very poor over there. And the packing company was over there. And very often on Sunday morning, there'd be a dead man propped up at the edge of Taylorville. He'd gotten killed down in some brawl, and nobody would know anything about it. They stuck together very good. And that happened often.

JK: These were really disadvantaged people of the community.

HOLLIS: Of the community and, of course, as Prohibition came in, this made it even more dangerous because

HOLLIS: of the bootlegging and the illicit drinking of hard liquor.

JK: I see. I see.

Well, as you viewed this, what do you think were some of the significant factors that affected this? What brought about this change? Did the economy itself or . . .

HOLLIS: I'd say the . . .

JK: . . . the individuals . . .

HOLLIS: Terre Haute has a strong background of educated people, and it has a strong background of union people. And I think the way the evolution has come about is by the growth and the strength of the union and by the growth of the education facilities and the educated people in Terre Haute. It's made for quite a change, and Terre Haute is a beautiful town to live in now, I think. But it's not a town of growth or not a town that is, you might say, extraordinarily progressive. One of the professors at Indiana State wrote a thesis, "Terre Haute-- the City of Non-Growth" . . . of "non-growth."

JK: Do you agree with this premise?

HOLLIS: Yes, I agree with the premise. Of course, we have these suburbs that have grown up around Terre Haute that under ordinary circumstances would be annexed; and probably there are as many people in the area or even more, but the suburbs are even short a great number of them. And /there is/ the deterioration of this area where the middle class railroad workers were in the avenues from Locust Street to Eighth Avenue and from, we'll say, almost from 3rd Street clear out to 25th Street. This was a very, very good area for the railroad people living there -- the conductors, the brakemen, and the engineers and firemen. /They were/ very, very fine people /and/ had nice homes. Naturally when those people moved out or were gone, they deteriorated into what they are now.

JK: What about the growth of the shopping centers?

HOLLIS: The shopping centers, it looks as if . . . Terre Haute has never been a managed town in my opinion.

HOLLIS: It's like "Topsy." Whenever somebody got the idea to do, he did. And if it worked, it was wonderful; and if it didn't work, why it just went to hell. The fellow that had the idea of the shopping center down south of town . . .

JK: Southland?

HOLLIS: No, not Southland, Joe. The big one.

JK: Honey Creek Square?

HOLLIS: Honey Creek Square. That was on the Ijams farm and a man from Evansville by the name of May developed that. And that drew all the business down into that area and they even brought another area across the road, Towne South Plaza/.

END OF TAPE

TAPE 2-SIDE 1

HOLLIS: The Wabash River bridge . . . for years and years and years there was only one that made Terre Haute accessible to the West. And the interurbans and streetcars and foot traffic, horse traffic, automobiles came over it. When they urban renewed and cut the access to Main Street from the road across . . . from the bridge, they threw all the people to the south. And I've noticed that the shopping area south of town in Honey Creek Square now about, I would say, up to 20% or more of the people are from the beautiful ground land of Illinois around Paris, Arcola, Tuscola . . . and have a great deal of money to spend. They've cut them off from the downtown area because there's no way to come straight through from the Wabash bridge to 7th and Wabash. You have to go . . . turn to your right and when you turn to your right once, it's very easy to turn to your right again and go on south rather than come down Ohio which is not productive as to retail sales and have to turn back to . . .

JK: Do you think then that Ohio should become the center of the downtown area?

HOLLIS: No, I think what should be done, they should do like Paris, Illinois, /and others/ that were selfish towns. They paved the right-hand side of the street going into town and left the left-hand side going out

HOLLIS: of town unpaved. (chuckles) That was back in those days.

JK: (laughs)

HOLLIS: So, if we had one road leading in to Wabash Avenue, they could get out the best way they could by going to Cherry or however else they could get out of town. It's surprising how these little things affect /areas/. Now, you know, if a man wanted to go downtown, he can turn onto Ohio, then turn back on Wabash. But you don't want to. You're in a hurry; you want to get where you're going . . .

JK: You feel that there's not been good planning in . . .

HOLLIS: There's not been good planning as far as the downtown area of Terre Haute . . .

JK: Do you see any hope for the downtown area with the redevelopment plan and some that has been completed?

HOLLIS: In a different way, I think Terre Haute -- the downtown area -- will become a shopping place for the college to a certain extent, 'although . . .

JK: College -- you're speaking about Indiana State?

HOLLIS: Indiana State University. And it will be a shopping area for money. Of course, the banks and building and loans will be located along Wabash Avenue.

And since they've turned Deming /originally built as a hotel/ into an elderly housing and if they get the Terre Haute House turned into elderly housing, you'll have a certain amount of trade. But witness the removal of the big drugstore across the street, on the south side of the street.

JK: Osco?

HOLLIS: Osco. In a way we thought that it was doing a great job, and it disappears from there and goes to Honey Creek Square and with not, I don't believe, as much area. But we thought they were doing a good job downtown.

So, each one that comes out it's harder to

HOLLIS: replace in an area that you might say is blighted than it is to take them to a new place where there seems to be growth going on. That Honey Creek Square has now spawned the other area south -- the south area

JK: Where Service Merchandise is?

HOLLIS: Yes, Service Merchandise.

JK: Towne South Plaza?

HOLLIS: Towne South Plaza. The next thing you know we'll have a South South Plaza, and I think we'll go all the way to Sullivan. (chuckles)

JK: (laughs heartily)

HOLLIS: With these plazas.

JK: Well . . . but do you, in your mind, have some people that you feel have made significant contributions to this community?

HOLLIS: Oh, tremendous! The community is good. I love Terre Haute; I've lived here all my life, and if the winter don't get these bones, I'll probably live here 'til I die. But it would be impossible to name the people that have contributed to it. The cultural thing from W. W. Parsons, who was president

JK: William Wood Parsons, who was president of Indiana State Teachers -- Normal School [Indiana State University].

HOLLIS: That's right. My mother graduated from there in 1884 and was a schoolteacher. And the other presidents of the college that have come on down -- the professors we've had! Rose Poly [Rose-Hulman Institute], the contributions [are great]. And the names that come to your mind of people that are big in chemistry and engineering have spread out all over the country, and this is a tremendous contribution to the city of Terre Haute. And the families that we've had -- the Fairbanks, the Fairbanks family has been . . .

JK: What was the . . .

HOLLIS: There were two families of Fairbanks -- E. P.

HOLLIS: Fairbanks and Crawford Fairbanks.

JK: Which one?

HOLLIS: E. P. -- Edward P. Fairbanks. They were brothers, and Crawford Fairbanks. And the Hulman family, and the Smith family. That's the Henry Smith family.

JK: Henry Smith.

HOLLIS: Yeah, Henry Smith.

JK: His son is . . .

HOLLIS: President of the Terre Haute First National Bank.

JK: Donald Smith?

HOLLIS: Donald Smith. And Henry is president of the Deep Vein Coal Company and several oil companies -- 500 Oil -- and, well, they're too innumerable to mention.

And they all contributed. The Stahl-Urban Company contributed, the Ehrmann family contributed, the Paige family in the music business contributed and have gone along real well. I'm afraid to name any more because I'd slight people that have . . .

JK: Well, I think you've given us a good idea. Now, in summation, how do you feel about Terre Haute. You've lived here all your life. What do you think the future holds for Terre Haute? What would you like to see the future hold?

HOLLIS: Joe, in May I love it; in February, I hate it! The reason, the weather. But if I were young, I think Terre Haute would be just as good a place or a better place for me to live. It was a good place to bring up kids. When I could handle the weather, I wrote a poem about Terre Haute that was published in the paper and expressed my love for Terre Haute and what I thought about it and the people of Terre Haute. If they'd tear it all down tomorrow except just the people, it would still be a great place because there's nothing anyplace that compares with Terre Haute in the way of friendliness and kindness

HOLLIS: and the goodness of people. The people are it, and I don't think this will ever change because I don't think that there's going to be enough enmity built up anyplace along here that will tear the town down as far as people is concerned.

JK: Well, Jim, thank you very much for talking with us and giving this for the oral history project of Terre Haute.

HOLLIS: Well, of course, I started carrying papers on the street at five years old -- the Saturday Spectator.

JK: What paper did you carry?

HOLLIS: Carried the Saturday Spectator. And had holes in my shoes and . . .

JK: That was a daily or a weekly?

HOLLIS: That was a weekly paper. And then I graduated to carrying, delivering the Terre Haute Post, which is now defunct, the Terre Haute Star . . .

JK: Was that a daily newspaper?

HOLLIS: That was a daily newspaper and the dogs used to bite me.

JK: (laughs heartily)

HOLLIS: From there I went to delivering for Phil Silvers, who was a specialty house . . .

JK: Specialty house in what?

HOLLIS: In furs. He was a great furrier.

JK: Furrier?

HOLLIS: He was from the old country and finally ended up with a store downtown. He had a furrier named Max Mandel, who was a great . . . one of the best makers of furs that . . .

JK: Designers?

HOLLIS: Designers and makers. There's a great deal to that we don't understand unless you saw a pelt worked.

HOLLIS: And then the May sisters ran a specialty shop where the exclusive people in Terre Haute shopped for hats and dresses. /It was a/ small shop, but I delivered for them. And back in those days, if you got a quarter tip, you were great. But some of these ladies from great families in Terre Haute would give me as high as a quarter tip when I'd deliver a package for them. And I was only around 10 or 12 years old then, riding a bicycle four or five miles a day to deliver after school. Then this was . . .

JK: This was during high school then?

HOLLIS: Well, this was before high school.

JK: Grade school?

HOLLIS: /In/ grade school. Yeah. Then I got into football and athletics when I got into high school. But the Browns that ran the furniture store here were great philanthropists. Of course, there are none of them left here.

And the Silversteins and all The storekeepers were great . . . and Levins which is gone /and Sid Levin/.

JK: You didn't work for all of these?

HOLLIS: No, I worked for most of them though. I worked for a drugstore known as The City Hall Pharmacy. It was run by a man by the name of Gus Rosenfeldt.

JK: Where was that located?

HOLLIS: That was at the corner of 4th and Walnut which was directly across the street from the police station, and it seemed back during that time (it was during Prohibition) we carried for medicinal purposes . . . they had a pint or two of good Four Roses whiskey back there that the mayor . . .

JK: It was actually called "Four Roses"?

HOLLIS: Oh, yes, it was "Four Roses." And some of the people that were high up in the /city/ that needed a shot of whiskey every now and then would come And the hotels were down there. And I remember

HOLLIS: one instance they had a hotel owner that came across for a box of Havana Stubs, which was a cigar brand name (he bought 'em by the box). And the basement under this hotel . . . under this pharmacy where I worked was very, very dark. So, I was about 10 years old and he came in and I was the only one there. He said, "I see you're out of Manila Stubs." I said, "Yes, we are." And I knew there was a box or crate of them in the basement, but they'd scared me the week before my hidin' behind the furnace and lightin' a flashlight behind a falseface. And I'd run back up the stairs and I'd squeezed the matches I'd had in my hand until they caught fire, so I was scared. And that's the only job I ever got fired. The next day, he came in and he said, "Jim said there wasn't any Manila Stubs." And the owner of the drugstore, Gus Schoenfeldt, said, "oh, we got a whole crate of 'em downstairs." (laughs) So, he said, (continuing to laugh) "Jim, if you can't get down there and get those, we'll have to dissolve partnership."

JK: (laughs) Oh, boy!

HOLLIS: (laughs) Of course, the things that all of us carry in our memory of our childhood are too long and too innumerable to mention, but it was a great life up to now, and I hope I can continue to see the friendliness and beauty of Terre Haute until I die. Thank you.

JK: Thank you.

HOLLIS: Thank you, Joe, for letting me talk.

JK: Thank you, Jim, for talking with us.

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